

Housing Committee Meeting Minutes: 12:30 pm June 12th, 2020 via Zoom

Attendees: Alicia Armstrong, Joe K., Pam Dearborn, Patrick Shattuck, Irene Nagle, Alice Kitchel, Ron Steen, Kim Lavoie

Committee Mission: "To support economic growth by improving the overall quality of residential and commercial properties in St. Johnsbury."

Rental Housing Improvement Incentive Program Update

- Cal Rec Ads & Listserv e-mail sent out on June 10, 2020
- The group discussed awardees' questions about project changes due to COVID-19. In particular, change of contractors because of scheduling challenges, deviations in expenses due to timing and, and proposed project timelines. JK mentioned that once the grants were awarded, the Town would manage these details and come to the Housing Committee and Review Committee for large deviations and extension requests.
- One potential applicant asked about ingress and egress that serves multiple units and whether that would qualify for multiple grants? The group thought that would be considered one project and would qualify for one grant. The group also mentioned that improvements to the entrance of a building only qualifies if access to the apartments meet Universal Design Guidelines.

COVID-19 & Housing – stimulus funding and who is eligible?

- Patrick S. provided an update on the housing stimulus program that is being developed by the legislature. Included, will likely be funding for landlords to invest in their units and a rental and mortgage reimbursement component. Criteria for access to the funding is being developed and will include serving the homeless and underserved population.
- Joe mentioned that he had sent a letter to Commissioner Hanford to see if the RHIGP would qualify for stimulus funding?
- Details of Vermont's housing stimulus program are forthcoming.

Tax Stabilization - Commercial with Housing Component

- Joe provided a brief summary of how residential tax stabilization may be implemented. Stabilizing the property value for municipal property taxes does not have a significant enough impact to spur investment. If we could leverage the state education portion of the property taxes, there would be enough incentive to invest in residential property.
* Maybe this is a good task for the Housing Committee? A letter to VEPC requesting property stabilization for both state and municipal taxes.

Review Housing Action Plan – The group reviewed the Housing Action Plan to assess next steps. Further discussion to take place at the July meeting.

Other Business

Irene discussed the idea of net-positive energy efficiency housing and whether there may be an opportunity here in St. J. for such a project. Maybe Calderwood LLC or the Fire site would be well-suited for a net-positive housing pilot project?

Patrick described the mixed-income project RE is developing in Lyndonville. This is a mixed income housing project and there is a waiting list to get in.

Pam D. – mentioned that there is still discussion about whether St. J. can support a downtown health clinic. This idea has been percolating for several years and may provide an anchor tenant for a housing project.

Meeting adjourned at 1:45pm. Minutes submitted by JK.

Next meeting- July 10, 2020 at 12:30pm via Zoom.